

Utah Committee of Consumer Services

Your Residential and Small Commercial Utility Consumer Advocate

Consumer Newsletter

Utah Department of Commerce

Gearing Up For Winter — Is Your Furnace Ready?



Inside this issue:

Energy Efficiency — High Priority Throughout West

Winter Weather Preparedness

Heating Bill Assistance Programs

Proper Disposal of Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs

Extra Safety Measure

As Utah's temperature begins to fall, home thermostats start to rise—and so will those energy bills. Sometimes, a high heating bill indicates that your heating system needs maintenance. To lessen the punch of escalating energy bills this winter, plan now to get your annual furnace tune-up.

An inspection by a qualified, reputable heating technician can help to ensure that your natural gas furnace will provide comfortable, reliable natural gas heat when you need it most—at the same time preventing any potential problems.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, the following maintenance should be provided by a heating system professional:

- Check the condition of vent connection pipe and chimney. Parts of the venting system may have deteriorated over time.

- Check the physical integrity of the heat exchanger. Heat exchangers can crack and deteriorate, potentially causing dangerous combustion gasses to enter your home—an important safety reason to have them inspected.

- Adjust the controls on the furnace to provide optimum settings for both efficiency and comfort.

As furnace inspection costs vary, it may be wise to obtain an estimate from several reputable licensed heating or plumbing contractors who are certified by the state or a trade organization. A certified technician will be able to perform the inspection and make any necessary adjustments.

In addition to a professional tune-up, there are some simple maintenance steps you can take to improve furnace performance and safety:

- Clean or replace filters every other month
- Remove flammable ob-

jects from around your furnace and water heater

- Check venting to ensure it is clear
- Check the exhaust flue to the outside to ensure that it is clear of obstructions and in good condition with all connections securely fastened
- Replace a frayed or cracked blower belt
- Keep the blower door securely in place at all times
- Secure your water heater to prevent tipping in case of earthquake
- Check to make sure your furnace, boiler and water heater have an inspection sticker.

A well-maintained furnace will work more efficiently, last longer, save you money and increase your comfort this winter.

Be sure your licensed heating technician is certified by the state or a trade organization.

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Energy Efficiency is High Priority Throughout the West

Increasing energy efficiency is high priority throughout the west. At the 2007 Western Governors' Association (WGA) Energy Efficient Buildings Workshop, Colorado Gov. Bill Ritter called energy conservation and efficiency "the richest sources of new energy."

"The cheapest watt of electricity is the watt that isn't consumed at all. It's called the negawatt," Ritter said. "This is true whether we're talking about compact fluorescent light bulbs, more efficient use of passive solar, or improved insulation and windows."

Governors in the West are serious about promoting energy efficiency. Utah Governor Jon

Huntsman, Jr. has set an ambitious state goal to increase energy efficiency 20 percent by 2015. He is promoting improved energy efficiency in state facilities and is encouraging collaboration and support from all citizens.

In Utah, there are powerful reasons to improve energy efficiency. Utah is one of the fastest growing states in the nation and it also happens to lead the nation in supersized homes, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. These factors alone have a significant affect on Utah's energy consumption. Consequently, peak demand in Utah is growing and challenging our resources.

According to the WGA Policy

Resolution 07-16, energy efficiency is the easiest, least expensive and least controversial way to reduce energy demand. Energy efficiency means reducing the amount of energy consumed for necessary energy services through more efficient appliances, better insulated homes, more efficient windows, etc. It is also about changing behavior—more car pooling, more use of mass transit, turning down thermostats in the winter, etc., where possible.

As governors throughout the west push for an accelerated deployment of energy efficiency, citizens throughout the west will benefit by finding ways to make it happen—through more efficient technology and changed behavior.

Winter Weather Preparedness: *Tips to Reduce Heating Bills*

With the winter's chill approaching, now is the time to winterize your home. Below are some simple measures most of us can undertake now to reduce our overall winter heating bills this winter and save energy:

- Make sure the damper for the fireplace is closed tightly. Consider having a top mount fireplace damper installed. This provides tighter seals and prevents

heat from escaping.

- Install a programmable thermostat — one that can automatically set the temperature higher when you are awake and lower when you are sleeping or at work.
- Install caulking around windows and doors, and use weather-stripping to ensure that there are no gaps that are letting warm

air out and cold air in.

- Add more insulation to the attic. Even if you have drafty windows and doors, the majority of your heat escapes through the ceiling.

Source: Consumer Energy Council of America

Governor Huntsman has declared November 4th - 10th as Utah's Winter Weather Preparedness Week 2007.

Heating Bill Assistance Programs—You May Be Eligible

HEAT—Utah's Home Energy Assistance Target Program provides winter utility payment assistance to low-income households. It targets those who are truly vulnerable—the lowest income households with the highest heating costs proportionately (the disabled, elderly, and families with preschool-age children).

HEAT is funded 100% by the Federal Government through the Department of Health and Human Services. HEAT begins November 1, 2007 and ends in April (except for the demonstration Year-Round Program). To find out if you are eligible

for HEAT assistance, please visit:

**<http://community.utah.gov>
or call the HEAT office at:
(801) 538-8642.**

REACH—The Residential Energy Assistance through Community Help Program is funded by voluntary contributions from local residents, Questar employees and stockholders. It helps qualified income-eligible individuals pay their utility bills. Applicants must be at least 65 years old and/or handicapped or disabled. The program is a year-round program and will be open as funding permits. Customers must have applied for assistance through the state's HEAT pro-

gram before applying for REACH. REACH applications are available at local Red Cross offices. For appointments or information, call toll free: **(800) 328-9272**

CATHOLIC COMMUNITY SERVICES also helps qualified income-eligible individuals pay their utility bills. To be eligible, utilities must be on and the customer must have applied for the HEAT program first, during the HEAT season. The program runs January through September or until funds are exhausted. Customers may schedule an appointment by calling:

(801) 977-9119

Proper Disposal of Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs

Compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) are highly efficient.

They use 75 percent less energy and on average last 7 to 10 times longer than standard incandescent bulbs.

But because CFLs contain tiny amounts of mercury, they should be treated as household hazardous waste and not thrown in the ordinary garbage or recycling bin when spent. They require special disposal.

Until recently, there have not

been many convenient places for conscientious consumers to drop

off their spent fluorescent lights for proper handling. However, now there are eight county libraries around the valley designated as collection points. They include:

- Bingham Creek, 4834 W 9000 S, West Jordan
- Calvin Smith, 810 E 3300 S, Millcreek
- Whitmore, 2197 E Fort Union Blvd (7000 S), Cottonwood Heights



- Draper, 1136 E Pioneer Rd (12400 S), Draper
- Hunter, 4740 W 4100 S, West Valley City
- Magna, 8339 W 3500 S, Magna
- South Jordan, 10673 S Redwood Road (1700 W), South Jordan
- R.V. Tyler, 8041 Wood St. (55 West), Midvale

For more information, contact the hazardous waste handling facility in your area or visit the Utah Department of Environmental Quality Web site:

**[www.deq.utah.gov/
Pollution_Prevention/
CFLs.htm](http://www.deq.utah.gov/Pollution_Prevention/CFLs.htm)**



Utah! Committee of Consumer Services

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

VISIT US AT

WWW.CCS.UTAH.GOV

Extra Safety Measure: *Install a Carbon Monoxide Detector*

Carbon monoxide (CO) detectors/alarms are highly recommended in homes with fuel-burning appliances, such as natural gas furnaces, stoves, ovens, water heaters, and fuel burning space heaters. CO detectors are designed to alarm before potentially life-threatening levels of CO are reached.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends that one CO detector/alarm be installed in the hallway outside the bedrooms in each separate sleeping area of the

home. CO Alarms may be installed into a plug-in receptacle or high on the wall because CO from any source will be well-mixed with the air in the house. Make sure furniture or draperies cannot cover up the alarm.

Install a CO detector/alarm that meets the requirements of the current UL standard 2034 or the requirements of the IAS 6-96 standard. A carbon monoxide detector can provide added protection, but is no substitute for an annual furnace inspection.

The Committee of Consumer Services is a Utah state governmental agency that represents the interests of small business owners, farmers and ranchers, and residential consumers of natural gas, electric, & telephone utilities.